



# Process Alaska

In the wake of Sarah Palin's Vice-Presidential run in 2008, American media culture and entertainment has indulged in a steadily growing fascination with Alaska. Television programs like: *Deadliest Catch*, *Ice Road Truckers*, *Mounted In Alaska*, *Tougher In Alaska*, *Sarah Palin's Alaska*, and *Bristol Palin's: Life's A Tripp*, have fueled the nation's desire to ogle Alaskan life from a comfortable distance. From the perspective of an outsider with little knowledge of Alaska these programs, in a way, peaked my interest as well. My experience with mass media, the Internet, and cable TV would not allow me to accept the images being presented to me as balanced. I began to ask the question, where is the Alaska I'm not allowed to view from my living room?

I was granted a glimpse of what I was looking for when the Co-Curator of this exhibition, Michael Conti, posted some pictures of contemporary visual art from the Anchorage area to social media. He and I began a dialog and we decided that we were going to organize an exhibition of Alaskan art in New York City. However, I felt that credible participation on my part demanded a firsthand meeting with some Anchorage area artists. I traveled to Alaska to see things for myself, what I found was a thriving contemporary arts community, a world class art museum, and some of the most thoughtful and sensitive artists I've encountered. I still have a great deal to learn about Alaskan art and culture, this exhibition is a step in the right direction. It is my sincere hope that viewers of *Process Alaska* will emerge from the experience with a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted visual culture of "The Last Frontier."

Richard Cutrona  
Co-Curator

What brings people up to Alaska? Some are running toward something, some are running away from something. Some drifted North as adults in search of something real. Some were born here, offspring from the pioneers of a previous time. Some have ancestors that migrated east from Asia across the Bering Land Bridge during the Pleistocene Era.

There are many reasons why people choose to stay, work and make a life of art here. The remoteness of the land adds layers of difficulty to the process of art making. But still the mechanics are the same for artists here as everywhere, from imagining to making to exhibiting.

Inspired by this land and its culture, these ten Alaskan artists are in the process of drawing, painting, carving, casting, appropriating, shooting, editing and printing. Having tools shipped up, ordering supplies and shipping artwork Outside. They harvest from the land. Akin to modern day prospecting, they lay claim to ideas. They are hunters and gatherers.

Michael Conti  
Co-Curator



# Brian Adams

Brian Adams is a freelance photographer based in Anchorage, Alaska specializing in environmental portraiture and medium-format photography.



SHISMAREF HOOP  
Medium format  
12" x 12"

Flooding and erosion induced by climate changes have been progressively threatening the survival of many of Alaska's villages, including Kivalina, Newtok, and Shishmaref, for the past several years, so that these native communities are now faced with the grand task and expense of relocation and rebuilding. While government agencies have worked to provide financial assistance to these communities, the need is still great; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has estimated that moving Newtok alone could cost over \$130 million, with twenty-six other Alaskan villages in immediate danger and 60 considered under threat in the next ten years. *Disappearing Villages* seeks to bring attention to the grandeur of these expenses and hardships in order to garner support for their survival, while attempting to tell the stories of the people within these communities through photographs in an effort to preserve their historical pasts.

# Sonya Kelliher-Combs

Growing up in Nome, Alaska, I spent summers at our camp where we worked, hunted and gathered food and supplies for the winter. It was there where I learned to listen to the land, to my family, and to Elders. Through observation and the practice of time-honored traditions -- skin sewing, beading, and food preparation -- I realized my role as Woman, Daughter, Sister, Wife and Artist. The intimacy of traditional women's work has allowed me to examine the connections between Western and Indigenous cultures. I examine identity through my work. I use techniques learned as a little girl: adorned patterns, symbols and designs infused with meaning.

I'm inspired by the relationship of our ancestors to their environment -- how they used skin, fur and membrane in material culture. The subjects of my work are patterns of history, family, and culture. Through the use of synthetic, organic, traditional and modern materials and techniques I build upon the traditions of my people. Personal symbolism forms the imagery. Symbols speak to history, culture, family, and the life of our people; they also speak about abuse, marginalization and the struggles of indigenous people.

I live in a modern world but still depend on the cultural traditions and values of our people, respect of land, animals, sea and each other. I strive to create works that address these issues





SECRET DRAWINGS  
8.5" x 5.5" each



# Michael Conti

Michael Conti is a photographer and video artist based in Anchorage, Alaska. He was born in San Francisco, raised in Pennsylvania and came to Alaska at age 23 in search of adventure.



## **HOCKEY SHORTS**

Standard definition video, 15 min 30 sec. running time -

He tapes up his hockey stick and tightens his laces in preparation for the game of his life. Teammates nowhere in sight. Coach gone AWOL. This solitary player insists on the game whether he's skating the biggest ice in the land or he's bringing his own. Ice time is at a premium in this arena where the clock runs at a glacial pace.

In my short videos the masculine myths of the Sports Hero and the Wilderness Man are subverted as the player slams against the boards of the rational. Like Don Quixote on skates he body checks the improbable to sad and comic results. An exercise in obsession, the determined and solitary hockey player shoots at a goal that is never revealed, never attained in the harsh and remote landscape of Alaska.



# Julie Decker

Julie Decker holds a doctorate degree in contemporary art history, a master's degree in arts administration, and bachelor degrees in fine art and journalism. Decker has authored numerous articles and publications on the art and architecture of Alaska. As an artist she works in painting, sculpture and photography.

These works are part of the *Sketch* series, which is a rapid response to popular culture and politics. The works are sketched on plywood – rough, ready, and direct.



RED, WHITE & BLUE  
Pencil, pastel and  
acrylic on wood  
24" x 24"

# Nicholas Galanin

Culture cannot be contained as it unfolds. My art enters this stream at many different points, looking backwards, looking forwards, generating its own sound and motion. I am inspired by generations of Tlingit creativity and contribute to this wealthy conversation through active curiosity. There is no room in this exploration for the tired prescriptions of the “Indian Art World” and its institutions. Through creating I assert my freedom.

Concepts drive my medium. I draw upon a wide range of indigenous technologies and global materials when exploring an idea. Adaptation and resistance, lies and exaggeration, dreams, memories and poetic views of daily life--these themes recur in my work, taking form through sound, texture, and image. Inert objects spring back to life; kitsch is reclaimed as cultural renewal; dancers merge ritual and rap. I am most comfortable not knowing what form my next idea will take, a boundless creative path of concept-based motion.



THINGS ARE LOOKING  
NATIVE, NATIVE'S  
LOOKING WHITER  
Giclée print  
15.5" x 20.25"



# Garry Mealor

Garry Mealor moved to Anchorage, Alaska in 1994 from Florida where he was on the faculty of the Ringling School of Art and Design. Garry is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Alaska Anchorage Art Department.



STOPPING BY FENCES ON A SNOWY EVENING #2

Transparent watercolor-16"x 20"

My watercolors begin with snippets of conversation, déjà vu, dreams, and chance encounters. Ambiguity is important not only in content but in process. Often, I saturate a finished painting with water and primary colors. The resulting image is a ghost of the original and transforms original intent. The painting becomes a journey through juxtapositions of baffling imagery that suggest as much as it reveals.

# Jimmy Riordan

Jimmy Riordan was born in Anchorage, Alaska. His work is not bound by any specific media. He is a narrator, telling stories through books, installation, print, sculpture, education and translation.

The sculptures included in this exhibit are intended first and foremost as novelty, taking advantage of the circumstance, myth, culture and materials that are Alaska.



TAXIDERMIED CHICKEN

Net WT 10.75 oz.

Tin can, pewter, wood

5" x 7" x 8"



# Gretchen Sagan

Gretchen Sagan is an Inupiaq artist from Alaska. She currently divides her time between studios in her hometown of Anchorage, Alaska, and Tallinn, Estonia.



SEVERANCE Copperplate etching 15.75" x 15.75"

In my work I am constantly examining life situations and attempt to portray the bare essence of an event, feeling or sensation. It could be the residue of an encounter, fleeting glance, a dialogue, a supposition. The ideas that I interpret are universal and transcend physical and cultural boundaries. I draw on my personal experiences and try to illustrate these themes with simple forms, lines and voids. It doesn't matter to me how the connection is made, I invite the viewer to relate with my work at any level, whether it be material, cerebral or emotional.

# Deborah Tharp

I create fictions that challenge traditional visual perceptions. Fictions that hopefully speak to or dramatize some of the thoughts, questions, curiosities and emotions, that make us human. My work is derived through digital photographic compositing techniques using appropriated imagery scanned from various vintage magazine and book sources from the 1950's and 60's and often blended with digitally photographed images. Text is sometimes incorporated to shape the ideas. My hope is to illuminate historical cultural associations and reflect them in the timeless continuum of present personal and political history.



PHOTO LUSTER  
Giclee print  
20" x 24"



# Michael Walsh

Michael Walsh has been making moving image art for over 20 years, working with single channel work, primarily 16mm and 35mm. Wanting to move beyond the constraints of single channel work, Walsh began to work in the expanded cinema, using found sculptural objects and projecting digital moving images onto, into and around these objects. Walsh lives in Homer Alaska, where he bitterly paints homes and is a waiter, hoping someday someone will want him to quit his job and convince him to become a dog musher.

It is my goal to create work that has the veneer of beauty and the punch line of wit and humor, all the while dealing with important subject matter but without taking myself and my art so damn seriously.



KILLING THE KISS

Standard definition video

# Process Alaska

Public Reception  
Friday, September 7th,  
2012 / From 6-9PM

Good Question Gallery @ The DUMBO Spot  
160 Water Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Open to the public on the night of September 7th,  
2012. Viewings can be scheduled by appointment  
for collectors and curators.

[www.goodquestiongallery.com](http://www.goodquestiongallery.com)